

Public Health Preparedness and Response for Bioterrorism

CDC/Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Initiative Update

MAY 2001

State/Local Spotlight

The Connecticut Department of Public Health currently receives funding in 3 focus areas: epidemiology and surveillance, laboratory capacity for biologic agents, and Health Alert Network. Following are highlights of their recent accomplishments:

- The Connecticut Department of Health established a Health Alert Network Advisory Committee (HANAC) comprised of representatives from both the State and Local Health Departments. HANAC provides guidance to the Planning and Implementation of HAN activities in the state.
- The Office of Local Health Administration (OLHA), administrator of the HAN portion of the BT preparedness grant, featured a panel discussion of the Monroe County, NY video of a Health Alert Network Tabletop Exercise at its Fall 2000 Commissioner's Semi-Annual Local Health Directors' Meeting.
- The Spring 2001 Semi-Annual meeting featured principles and techniques of risk communication by Dr. Peters of the Covello Group and included bioterrorism and West Nile Virus case studies.
- Health alerts including food recalls, food contamination alerts, West Nile Virus updates, product recalls and lead exposure hazards were communicated to local health directors and other health participants via the broadcast fax system.
- The HAN sponsored Local Health Director website is now available to all LHDs. LHDs use this portal to record West Nile-related bird sightings, access jurisdiction-specific foodborne illness, tuberculosis incidence reports, transient non-community well information and view upcoming distance learning opportunities.
- A web-based inventory of CTLHD contact information was created and is available in varying formats to LHDs, DPH staff and the public.
- Regular DPH HANIT meetings have been initiated to discuss integration of public health data. Currently HANIT partners include: Office of Emergency Medical Services; Bureau of Regulatory Services; Environmental Health Water Supplies Unit; Bureau of Community Health, Tobacco Control Program; Bureau of Community Health, Infectious Disease Division, and; DPH Data Processing.
- The distance learning infrastructure was enhanced in Year 2. Eighteen satellite broadcasts have been offered to date with nine more broadcasts planned. Tapes of the broadcasts are available through the DL video library. A survey is under development to assess all the available downlink sites (both public and private facilities) and their technical capabilities. Direct marketing of broadcasts has been expanded to include diverse groups such as sanitarians, health educators, local first responders, clinicians, public health nurses, local elected officials and legislators.
- Development of a database-driven, interactive DL/continuing education website has begun. Envisioned as a clearinghouse, the site will provide information about distance and traditional learning opportunities, educate and promote web-based desktop training, and provide a forum for discussion sessions with public health authorities.
- 500 videotapes 'WMD & The First Responder' were distributed to first responders, hospital ER personnel and local health directors. The training video will familiarize members of the EMS system, with the basic steps to take when responding to and approaching an emergency scene with unknown hazards.
- HAN staff successfully facilitated a 90% response rate for the DOJ/CDC Public Health Emergency Preparedness Assessment (PHEPA) representing 98% of Connecticut's population. Six training sessions were held for LHDs and first responders. Informational packets were distributed and full-time telephone and online support was provided to LHDs during the information gathering and data entry phase of PHEPA. Data from the PHEPA is currently being extracted and will be analyzed to determine key areas for emergency preparedness training opportunities and inform HAN staff will focus on developing comprehensive local standards in the area of emergency response. A complete

analysis of CADH and CDC standards has been initiated. A report on the findings will be completed by the end of Year 2.

- Starter reference binders containing information and guidance on bioterrorism and emergency response have been distributed to LHDs including hard copies of key reports and other information from CDC Bioterrorism website. Periodically, new and updated information is sent to LHDs to keep the binder up-to-date and ensure provision of guidance for meeting standards on local public health emergency response.

For additional information contact Dr. James Hadler, Principal Investigator 860 -509-7995, james.hadler@po.state.ct.us; Leonard McCain, Project Director, Health Alert Network, 860 -509-7674, leonard.mccain@po.state.ct.us; or Zyg Dembek, Bioterrorism Coordinator, 860 -509-7995, zyg.munt.dembeck@po.state.ct.us.

CDC Update

- § Applications for supplemental awards for Focus Areas C and E are due to CDC on May 30. Applications for the additional funding available in the B1 focus area are due on June 15, 2001. If you have questions regarding these funding opportunities please contact your designated Team Leader.
- § These second in a series of four meetings to define core capacity and capabilities for state and local bioterrorism preparedness and response programs will be held in Kansas City, KS on June 6 -8. A variety of partners from state/local public health, academia, professional associations, emergency management, and others have been invited to participate in this meeting which will begin to define the core elements of state and local preparedness for bioterrorism.
- § The Laboratory Management and Support Branch of CDC's Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Program will begin conducting bimonthly conference calls with state and local public health laboratory staff to provide updates on federal laboratory activities and respond to questions about cooperative agreement activities. The first call will be conducted on June 1 from 3:30 to 4:30 pm ET. Beginning in July, these calls will be conducted the third Thursday of every other month (e.g. July 19, September 21, etc.) from 3:30 to 4:30 pm ET. For additional information, contact Myron Wettrich at 404 -639-0130 or mwettrich@cdc.gov.

Upcoming Events

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| June 10 -14, 2001 | Joint APHL/CSTE Annual Conference, Portland, OR,
http://www.aphl.org . |
| June 27 -30, 2001 | National Association of County and City Health Officials Annual Conference, <i>Confronting Disparities: Addressing the Social Determinants of Health</i> , Raleigh, NC, http://www.naccho.org . |
| June 28 -July 1, 2001 | National Environmental Health Association, Chemical and Bioterrorism Preparedness Conference, Atlanta, GA, http://www.neha.org/tracks.html . |
| Sept. 10 -11, 2001 | National Symposium on Hospital/WMD Consequence Management, Orlando, FL, sponsored by the National Institute for Government Innovation, call 888 -670-8200 for more information. |

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